

# Little boxes, little boxes... Vertex AQ's Pico mechanical dampers

by Roy Gregory

Damping spurious mechanical energy in hi-fi equipment is hardly news; if you think it is, take a look at the ten pages I've just written about racks! But here's something a little different, if not exactly new. Vertex AQ have taken the matrix composition of their Kinabalu platforms and built it into small but surprisingly heavy blocks, painted them prettily and given each one three thin but broad wooden feet. The thinking here is that you put them on a loudspeaker (or anything else for that matter) and they'll help dissipate unwanted energy flying around the structure. Speakers are the obvious candidate, simply because they have drive units generating large amounts of mechanical energy, as well as tuned air masses which also resonate.

Since they've arrived I've used the Picos with speakers as different as the Living Voice OBX-R2s, the Nola Pegasus and the Avalon NP2. In all cases they had a far from subtle impact on the sound, the biggest being the effect when placed on the cabinet directly above the Nola's upward firing mid-bass driver. However, even this paled into insignificance to the benefits when used with Eben's X-Baby. The Eben combines a small

cabinet with a powerful bass-mid driver, loaded by an improbably large port, making it pretty much a worst case scenario for intermodulation distortion. Add the large area radiator used for the high frequencies, along with its equally massive magnet assembly and face plate and it would be astonishing if the Picos didn't have an effect. Even so, I wasn't ready for the scale of the change.

one speaker to another, reflecting in part how effectively the designer has handled the problem to start with. But when the Picos are good they're very, very good and whilst you can't really describe them as cheap a trial is



Placing the Vertex cubes in the middle of the X-Baby top-plates banishes a cuppy colouration, intrusive glare and hardness on crescendos. The focus, separation and general clarity improve pretty dramatically too. The sound opens out, the music starts to breathe and in turn it really starts to sing.

The effects vary of course, from

quick, simple and immediately reversible. Available in black or silver, with other colours to order, in the right system these represent a complete bargain. Used with a set of the Vertex bi-wiring links they could amount to a whole new set of speakers. ➤

Vertex AQ Pico: \$295/pr

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